



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

Press Release

October 5, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Norman Googel
1-800-368-8808
304-558-8986

**ATTORNEY GENERAL DARRELL MCGRAW ANNOUNCES
WEST VIRGINIA'S PARTICIPATION IN "OPERATION ROAMING CHARGE"
State-Federal Partnership Targets International and Domestic Telemarketing Fraud**

Attorney General Darrell McGraw today announced his participation in "Operation Roaming Charge," the most successful and extensive multinational enforcement operation ever directed at telemarketing fraud schemes.

The ongoing action began January 1, 2004, and involved unprecedented coordination at the state, national and international levels to combat telemarketing fraud schemes. The schemes uncovered in this operation include every major category of telemarketing fraud: do-not-call violations; bogus lottery, prize and sweepstakes schemes; offers of nonexistent investments; bogus offers of "pre-approved" credit-cards or credit-card protection; employment and business opportunity swindles; tax fraud schemes; and "recovery room" schemes, in which criminals pretend to be members of law enforcement agencies who can help telemarketing fraud victims recover some of their losses if they pay nonexistent "fees."

Since the start of Operation Roaming Charge, at least 31 state Attorneys General have brought 279 criminal, civil, and regulatory actions against illegal telemarketing operations.

"The Operation Roaming Charge cases demonstrate that telemarketing fraud schemes have become increasingly international in scope and more sophisticated in the use of methods and techniques," said Attorney General McGraw. "A number of the cases also demonstrated that organized criminal operations are engaging in telemarketing fraud."

Overall, the operation has resulted in the arrest of more than 100 individuals in the United States and an additional 19 arrests overseas. More than 75 search warrants were executed as part of the operation, and 74 individuals have been convicted in the United States to date. The operation also involved civil and regulatory actions by various federal and state agencies.

Operation Roaming Charge investigations and actions led to the discovery of more than one million victims, who suffered losses totaling more than \$1 billion. This initiative involved coordination among the National Association of Attorneys General, 37 United States Attorneys' offices nationwide, the Criminal, Civil and Tax Divisions of the Department of Justice, 24 of the FBI's 56 field divisions, 14 of the Postal Inspection Service's 18 field divisions, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Federal Trade Commission, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the North American Securities Administrators Association, and numerous other federal, state, local and foreign law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

A news conference was held in Washington, D.C. today with U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft and representatives from the FBI, the U.S. Postal Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to provide details surrounding the initiative.

"Telemarketing fraud remains a Top Ten Consumer Complaint on NAAG's annual survey of consumer issues," said Vermont

Attorney General and NAAG President William Sorrell. "Since the start of this year, at least 30 state Attorneys General have successfully investigated and taken 279 enforcement actions to shut down fraudulent telemarketers here and in Canada who prey on unsuspecting consumers."

Victims of telemarketing fraud schemes should contact the Attorney General's office by calling 1-800-368-8808 or by e-mail at [\[url\]consumer@wvago.state.wv.us\[/url\]](mailto:consumer@wvago.state.wv.us). Or you can file complaints with the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Sentinel, either by calling the FTC's toll-free number, 1-877-FTC-HELP, or by filing an online form available through its website, <http://www.ftc.gov>

###